

# *City of Las Vegas*

## **AGENDA MEMO**

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING DATE: November 20, 2002**

**DEPARTMENT: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

**ITEM DESCRIPTION: Las Vegas High School Nomination to City of Las Vegas Historic Property Register**

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### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL**

Request by the city of Las Vegas to designate the Las Vegas High School administration building, gymnasium and associated site located at 315 South Seventh Street as a historic property in the city of Las Vegas (APN: 13934710038 and 13934710039), containing approximately 12.4 acres, WARD 5 (WEEKLY).

### **ANALYSIS**

The Las Vegas High School Administration Building, Gymnasium and associated site are currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places and are considered to be significant under criteria A and B.

The Las Vegas High School campus occupies a city block bounded by Seventh, Bridger, Ninth, and Clark streets in downtown Las Vegas. The Administration Building and Gymnasium occupy the northeast corner of the Las Vegas High School campus, an educational complex also incorporating tennis courts, a baseball field and track. The high school serves as a focal point for the surrounding residential neighborhood which was developed in the 1930's and is characterized by low scale, period revival dwellings.

The Las Vegas High School Administration Building and Gymnasium are two, architecturally significant buildings associated with the development of public, secondary education in the city of Las Vegas. The buildings are the most sophisticated examples of the Art Deco style in the City and were designed by the Reno architectural firm of George A. Ferris and Son. The Administration and Gymnasium buildings were constructed in 1931 as part of a three building educational complex and reflects the growth and development of Las Vegas during the period of the Hoover Dam construction.

The Las Vegas High School Administration Building and Gymnasium are architecturally significant as the only intact examples of monumental Art Deco design in Las Vegas. The structures are two of three major public buildings surviving from the period. The other intact public building from this period is the Federal Building/Post Office.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Las Vegas High School Academic Building and Gymnasium

AND/OR COMMON

Las Vegas High School Administration Building and Gymnasium

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

315 South Seventh Street

CITY, TOWN

Las Vegas

N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1

STATE

Nevada

N/A VICINITY OF

CODE

32

COUNTY

Clark

CODE

003

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

\_\_DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)

\_\_STRUCTURE

\_\_SITE

\_\_OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

☒ PUBLIC

\_\_PRIVATE

\_\_BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

N/A \_\_IN PROCESS

\_\_BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

☒ OCCUPIED

\_\_UNOCCUPIED

\_\_WORK IN PROGRESS

**ACCESSIBLE**

☒ YES: RESTRICTED

\_\_YES: UNRESTRICTED

\_\_NO

**PRESENT USE**

\_\_AGRICULTURE

\_\_MUSEUM

\_\_COMMERCIAL

\_\_PARK

☒ EDUCATIONAL

\_\_PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_ENTERTAINMENT

\_\_RELIGIOUS

\_\_GOVERNMENT

\_\_SCIENTIFIC

\_\_INDUSTRIAL

\_\_TRANSPORTATION

\_\_MILITARY

\_\_OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Clark County School Board of Trustees

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 551

CITY, TOWN

Las Vegas,

N/A VICINITY OF

STATE

Nevada 89125

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Clark County Assessor's Office

STREET & NUMBER

309 South Third Street

CITY, TOWN

Las Vegas,

STATE

Nevada

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historic Resources of Central Las Vegas

DATE

1984

\_\_FEDERAL \_\_STATE \_\_COUNTY ☒ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS Nevada State Museum and Historic Society

CITY, TOWN

Las Vegas

STATE

Nevada

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Summary

The Las Vegas High School Academic Building and Gymnasium are two, Art Deco style public buildings constructed as part of a three-building educational complex completed by the City of Las Vegas in 1931. Designed by the Reno architectural firm of George A. Ferris and Son, the buildings retain a high degree of architectural integrity and their educational use. The third building in the original complex was destroyed c. 1950.

Site

The Las Vegas High School campus occupies a city block bounded by Seventh, Bridger, Ninth and Clark Streets in downtown Las Vegas. The Academic building and Gymnasium occupy the northeast corner of the Las Vegas High School campus, a seven building educational complex also incorporating tennis courts, basketball courts, a football stadium and track. (See site plan) The high school serves as a focal point for the surrounding residential neighborhood which was developed in the 1930's and is characterized by low scale, period revival dwellings.

Elaboration

Academic Building

The Las Vegas High School Academic Building is a two story, reinforced concrete building oriented along a northeast-southwest longitudinal axis fronting Seventh Street. The sixteen by five bay, symmetrical building is supported by a concrete foundation and rises to a flat roof. The 208'-0" x 82'-0" structure utilizes a five-part design incorporating a central three bay entrance pavillion linked to projecting corner towers. Bay divisions are defined by abbreviated buttresses. The building is banded by an elaborate frieze incorporating stylized floral and vegetal motifs. A secondary chevron frieze is found between the wall buttresses on the north west elevation.

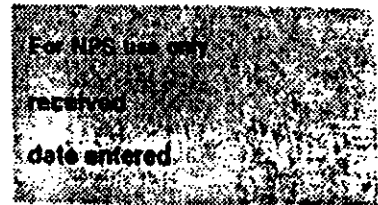
The principal entrance to the building is located on the northwest elevation and is reached by way of an open granite stair defined by tapered side walls. The highly ornamented entry includes double, raised panel, wooden doors enframed by simple wood surround. A fifteen light transom is found above the entry and is enframed by a simple wooden surround. The door and transom is slightly recessed from the wall plane. The bay opening is enriched by a relief incorporating floral, fauna and stylized Indian motifs. Above the bay opening is found a three panel relief with stylized figures.

Basement level window are double, three-light-over-three-light sash while second and third story windows are double, nine-light triple sash.

The northeast building elevation includes a central bay entry with double, raised panel doors and a ten-light transom. The entry is housed beneath a shallow, quatrefoil arch enriched by an elaborate arch relief. The Academic Building is the largest and most imposing building on the high school campus and serves as the central focus for the complex. Originally housing administrative offices, classrooms, library, science

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National Park Service

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laboratories and home economic classrooms, the Academic Building is presently used exclusively for administrative purposes.

Gymnasium

The Las Vegas High School Gymnasium is a symmetrical two-story, reinforced concrete building supported by a concrete foundation and terminating in a flat roof. The 113'-0" x 83'-0" building was constructed to accomodate 600 people. Similar in design approach to the Academic Building, the wall planes of the gymnasium are defined by shallow, tapered buttresses accented by foliated capitols. Intricately sculpted rondels are found between the wall buttresses. The roof line of the building is accented by a slightly projecting, unadorned cornice.

The principal entrance to the building is located on the northeast elevation and is housed in a projecting, five bay pavillion. This pavillion incorporates a projecting entry defined by a richly sculptured parapet and stylized Mayan arch. Three entries are housed in the central bays of the pavillion. These entries incorporate double metal doors enframed by metal surrounds and are reached by way of an open granite stair defined by concrete walls.

Edward R. Knapp Humanities Building

Included within the boundaries of the nomination is the Edward R. Knapp Humanities Building (1952,1976); a non-contributing classroom structure visually connecting the Academic Building and the Gymnasium. This two-story building is constructed in over size brick and includes an open court. The structure is supported by a concrete foundation and rises to a flat roof delineated by a simple board cornice. Wall planes are marked by simple concrete pilasters connected by slightly projecting concrete spandrels.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1930-31

BUILDER/ARCHITECT George A. Ferris and Son

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Criteria A, C

#### Summary

The Las Vegas High School Administration Building and Gymnasium are two, architecturally significant buildings associated with development of public, secondary education in the City of Las Vegas. The buildings are the most sophisticated examples of the Art Deco style in the City and were designed by the Reno architectural firm of George A. Ferris and Son. The Academic and Gymnasium Buildings were erected in 1930-31 as part of a three building educational complex and reflects the growth and development of Las Vegas during the period of the Hoover Dam construction.

#### elaboration Criteria A

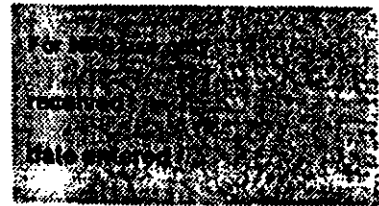
The development of Las Vegas can be traced to the 1905 construction of the San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad. By 1911 the SPLA and SL had established a characteristic western railroad town on the site to serve as a division point between Utah and California. Town development was confined to railroad related services until the late 1920's. The Congressional approval of the Boulder Canyon Act in 1928 spurred a period of intensive development for the community. This legislation provided funds for preliminary work on a dam for the Colorado River. The project, which resulted in the construction of nearby Hoover Dam, was responsible for a 125% population increase in Las Vegas between 1920 and 1930. From an isolated railroad service center, Las Vegas expanded to a modest city providing services to the dam project as well as the tourists attracted by its construction.

In recognition of Las Vegas' increased population and the role of education facilities in attracting a stable, permanent population, the local school district lead by superintendent Maude Frazier proposed the construction of a high school complex. The proposed project met with limited community resistance based on project costs, the size of the proposed complex and its site, then two blocks from the center of town.

Despite this opposition, a \$350,000 City bond issue was passed in 1930 for the construction of a three building high school complex encompassing a Shop Building (d.c.1950) and the existing Academic and Gymnasium Buildings. The complex was designed by architects George A. Ferris and Son and constructed by the Ryberg and Sorenson Construction Company of Salt Lake City. Work on the high school complex was begun in 1930 and completed by September of the following year.

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National Park Service

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The high school complex served as the focus for Las Vegas residential development for the next decade.

Since its construction in 1930-31, the high school complex has been expanded to incorporate seven educational buildings, tennis courts, basketball courts, a football stadium and track. The original Academic Building continues to serve as the campus' primary structure.

Criterion B

The Las Vegas High School Academic Building and Gymnasium are architecturally significant as the only intact examples of monumental Art Deco design in Las Vegas. The structures are two of four major public buildings surviving from the period. The other intact public buildings from the period are the Federal Building/Post Office, a Neoclassical style structure and the Las Vegas Hospital, an adobe, Spanish-Colonial Revival style building.

The complex was designed by architect, George A. Ferris and Son, a prominent Reno architectural firm practicing in Nevada during the first half of the twentieth century. G. A. Ferris is listed in the Reno City Directory for 1912. By 1930-31 Ferris had entered into a partnership with his son, Lehman. The Las Vegas High School complex was a major commission for the Ferris firm whose work focused on commercial buildings in the Reno area. The buildings' ornamentation represent a unique integration of Art Deco and southwestern motifs. This integration was categorized as Aztec Moderne by the Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal at the time of the buildings' construction.

In addition to being stylistically unique for the Las Vegas area, the Academic Building and the Gymnasium were the first monumental, reinforced concrete buildings to be constructed in the community.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. Charles Hall Page & Associates, Inc. Historic Preservation Inventory and Planning Guidelines: City of Las Vegas. San Francisco: Charles Hall Page & Associates, 1973
2. Las Vegas Age, 1905-1936.
3. Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal, 1930-1946.
- Moehring, Eugene P. "Public Works and the New Deal in Las Vegas, 1933-1940." Nevada Historical Society Quarterly, 24 (Summer 1918): 107-129.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A 

1	1
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6	6	7	4	0	0
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4	0	0	3	7	0	0
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B 

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C 

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D 

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Las Vegas Academic Building and Gymnasium occupies the northwest corner of the Las Vegas High School Campus bounded by Bridger, Ninth, Clark and Seventh Streets in Las Vegas, Nevada. The nominated site extends to a point 150'-0" east from the junction of Seventh and Bridger Streets and proceeds 250'-0" south; 150'-0" east; 150'-0" south; 300'-0" west and 400'-0" north along Seventh Street to the point of origin.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A			
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Kathryn Kuranda, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Historic Preservation and Archeology

STREET & NUMBER

201 South Fall Street, Room 106

CITY OR TOWN

Carson City

DATE

7/11/86

TELEPHONE

(702) 885-5138

STATE

Nevada

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL       

STATE       

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Ronald M. Jones

7/17/86

TITLE

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

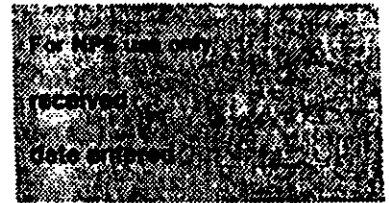
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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National Park Service**

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5. Myrick, David F. Railroads of Nevada and Eastern California. Vol. I: The Southern Roads. Berkley: Howell-North Books, 1963.
6. Paher, Stanley W. Las Vegas As It Began-As It Grew. Las Vegas: Nevada Publications, 1971.
7. Sanborn Map Company. Insurance Maps of Las Vegas, Clark County, Nevada. New York: Pelham, 1961.
8. Sanborn Map Company. Insurance Maps of Las Vegas, Clark County, Nevada. New York: Pelham, 1923.
9. Sanborn Map Company. Insurance Maps of Las Vegas, Clark County, Nevada. New York: Pelham, 1928.
10. University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Dickinson Library, Special Collections Department San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad Collection.